



Project Micah Resource Pack

Beyond Survival

And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. — Micah 6:8

Campaign focus

Australian aid and a world of need.

What is needed to take struggling communities, where even the basics of life can't be taken for granted, 'beyond survival'? As well as supporting TEAR's partners financially and with prayer, God's people are called to 'speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute' (Proverbs 31:8).

One way to do this is to lobby the Australian Government to ensure that Australia's aid program provides an integrated and consistent approach to poverty reduction. It is clear that well-targeted aid, aimed at providing basic social services, can have a profound impact on poor communities.

'Alexander Downer is particularly proud of Australia's foreign aid program. He shouldn't be. Not only has Australia's foreign aid budget failed to increase in line with our increased wealth, it has fallen by about 15% per head of population since 1967-68.'

Mike Steketee, *The Australian*, 1st February 2000.

'Based on the ambitions Australia rightly sets for its Aid Program, Australia should increase its ODA and move closer towards the 0.7 per cent ODA/GNP target set in its present aid policy statement.'

OECD DAC (Development Assistance Committee) Report 1999.

Use the sample letter below to write a letter to John Howard (as well as Peter Costello and Alexander Downer) calling for an increase in Australia's aid spending. For further information, check out the Australian Council For Overseas Aid (ACFOA) website: www.acfoa.asn.au. To add further details to your letter, use some of the information overleaf.

Address your letters to:

The Honourable John Howard, MP
Prime Minister

The Honourable Alexander Downer, MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs

The Honourable Peter Costello, MP
Treasurer

All can be reached at:

Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Sample letter (Hand-written letters are good.)

Dear xxxxxx,

I am writing to express my concern at the allocation for Overseas Aid in the 2001-2002 Budget and to call for a substantial increase in the amount given to overseas aid. It is unacceptable that Australia's aid budget has fallen to such historic lows relative to our national wealth and I urge you to address this as a matter of urgency. It is clear that the major causes of insecurity in our region are the impacts of growing economic inequality, lack of human rights, and the spread of diseases like HIV/AIDS. Through the aid program, Australia is tackling these problems and helping to build a more secure region. But more money is needed.

I support the Australian Government's continued generosity towards East Timor and recent action to cancel A\$7m of debt owed to Australia by Nicaragua. However, more needs to be done to achieve lasting success in poverty alleviation, not only in our own region but in Africa and South Asia, where more assistance is needed to fight disease, poverty and conflict.

I support Australia's aid program and its role in fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS, in protecting human rights and creating a more just, secure and peaceful world.

Yours faithfully,

More letter ammo



Australia should increase its current level of Overseas Development Assistance (aid) with the aim that it reach 0.7% of GNP (Gross National Product) by 2010.

Australia currently spends 0.25% of GNP on overseas aid (down from 0.3% in 1997). This is just over one third of the UN target of 0.7% for OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) nations.

The weighted OECD average for aid is 0.39% of GNP. Australia ranks 14th out of 22 OECD donor countries.

In line with a clear poverty focus, Australia should increase funding to basic social services (health, education, reproductive health and low cost water and sanitation.)

To meet the UN's calculation of Australia's 'fair share' of the cost of ensuring universal access to the critical basic social services, funding of these areas would require a 20% overall increase each year for the next four years.

125 million children never attend school and a further 150 million start primary school but drop out before learning how to read and write.

16 countries in sub-Saharan Africa have seen declines in school enrolment since 1990.

There are approximately 880 million illiterate adults in developing countries.

Australia gives only \$7 million towards low-cost water and sanitation programs. Given the immense importance of water and sanitation in preventing and combatting illness in poor communities, this amount should be increased forthwith.

Australia should immediately place the \$71 million owed us by Ethiopia and Vietnam in trust to be used by those countries for poverty alleviation, and should actively work to reform the World Bank's HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) initiative.

In 2000, 22 countries received some debt relief through HIPC. Some countries, however, such as Cameroon and Zambia, could end up paying more in debt service under this program than before.

Although Australia cancelled Nicaragua's debt of around \$7 million, we continue to collect debt payments from Vietnam and Ethiopia, two other HIPCs owing us money.

In December 2000, the UK Government established a trust fund for any of the 41 HIPCs owing money to Britain so that when these countries reach 'completion point' in the World Bank initiative, this money can be released for poverty alleviation. Australia should do the same.

HIPC is urgently in need of further reform as many countries continue to pay more in debt service than in health and education spending, and many countries are left out of the HIPC process entirely.

To become involved in TEAR's advocacy and campaigning network, Changemakers, contact Campaigns Coordinator Grant Hill on 1800 244 986 or at grant@tear.org.au.

For more information on *Jubilee Australia*, part of the international Jubilee debt cancellation coalition, visit the website at www.jubilee2000.org.au.

Take action with TEAR

TEAR's mission is to engage Australian Christians in God's work of justice and compassion, thereby demonstrating the gospel which is indeed good news to the poor.

TEAR supports the relief and long-term development initiatives of indigenous community-based Christian groups and mission organisations.

Priority is given to those programs which strive to fully involve the most marginalised and exploited members of each community.

You can respond by:

Financial and prayer support by becoming a TEAR partner or supporting TEAR's Children At Risk program.

Campaigning and advocacy through TEAR's Changemakers network.

Awareness and fundraising through TEAR's Really Useful Gift Catalogue.

Mobilising your church to support TEAR's partners around the world as they serve the poor by becoming a TEAR Rep.